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THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

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Beware of Wild West imitations of the Buffalo Bill Stories. They are about fictitious characters. The Buffalo Bill weekly is the only weekly containing the adventures of Buffalo Bill, (Col. W. F. Cody), who is known all over the world as the king of scouts.

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BUFFALO BILL'S RED ENEMY;

OR,

The Wizard of the Comanches.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

CHASED BY COMANCHES.

"So they have trailed me! Well, I guessed they would! It was a chance such clever redskins as the Comanches were hardly likely to miss, and now there are a hundred of the devils, if there's a single brave! Buffalo Bill's luck will have to stand by him to-day, or he loses his hair, to a certainty!"

The speaker was a man who would have attracted attention in any company. He was tall, finely built and handsome. There was on his face at the moment this story opens a look of dauntless courage and resolution.

It was a look that well befitted a man of his great reputation as an Indian fighter, for he was none other than that famous king of the scouts, Buffalo Bill.

He was clad in the picturesque buckskin garb worn

the hunter scouts of the far West, armed with rifle, revolver and knife, and mounted on a splendid horse of the mixed American and mustang breed.

He had just ridden up to the crest of a sandy ridge near the base of a range of hills in Arizona. Looking back, he saw a large body of Indians riding in column, and coming swiftly along the very track by which he had traveled. They were evidently following his trail.

"If I only had a few good scouts, or some of Navajo friendlies at my back, I'd stay and make a of it," he muttered. "But that's out of the question. There's no sense in showing fight till I'm cornered. Then it will be fight or die, and most likely both. Forward, old horse! Your speed alone can get us out of this scrape. There's cover, but it's twenty miles and we must reach it!"

are close

The noble animal seemed to understand his brave master's talk, for without the touch of spur, or even a loud word, he bounded forward on a long, springy lope, which would carry his rider rapidly toward the only shelter in sight—the wooded cliffs of the hills beyond.

A mile or more was passed, and another low ridge was crested.

Buffalo Bill looked back, and saw that the Indian band, riding fresh ponies at great speed, were gaining on him.

"Faster!" he muttered to his horse, and his spur, for the first time, lightly touched its flank.

The animal had traveled forty miles that summer day, in the early seventies, and was feeling the effect of its exertion, but the rider knew that they must make the hills or "go under."

The horse responded nobly to the touch of his rider's heel, and sped on at a rate which drew away from the pursuers slightly, as the border king discovered when he next looked back.

But, with the savage determination of wolves following a deer, the redskins kept on tirelessly.

When half the distance to the tree-clad slopes was done, about half of them were yet nearer than when the scout had first discovered them.

Yet there was not the slightest look of fear on his face. His set lips and flashing eyes showed that, though he knew his chance to be a desperate one, he was determined to struggle to the end.

The repeating rifle which had been slung at his back was now brought forward, ready for use; but his horse, stretched to its uttermost speed, still kept him out of range of the foe.

The foam flakes falling from its mouth, and the trembling of the overstrained limbs, told the rider that the race could not last much longer.

Either the redskins must tire soon, or he would not be able to reach the timber, where fight or concealment would give him a chance of saving his scalp.

Nearer and nearer he came to the hills, and the trees more distinctly at every leap of his faithful horse; nearer, too, came the pursuers in the rear.

The scout, who, at the start of the race, had looked but seldom, now kept an eye glancing almost constantly over his shoulder.

"Keep well together," he muttered. "If they were scattered, I'd give the horse a rest, and take half a mile from them down at long range. But to stop now would be the whole fifty too close. I can't afford it!

Keep on, old horse, if you can! Two miles more, and you shall rest."

The horse, goaded again by the spur, renewed its struggles, and for a little time it gained on the Comanches. Yet they were now so close that their yells, borne upon the breeze, plainly reached the scout's ears.

"They think they have me!" he muttered, grimly. "When they do, maybe they'll find me a tougher proposition than they expect! More than one of those yelling devils will go under before I eat lead! Get up, old horse; we may beat 'em yet!"

The gallant steed, cheered by his master's voice, gave a few mighty bounds.

Buffalo Bill, surprised and rejoicing, thought he would surely gain the hills in advance of the redskins, after all. He turned in his saddle, and shouted a defiance to the Comanches.

Alas, like many a triumph, his was short-lived!

The horse suddenly fell to the earth, in the very middle of its stride!

With a groan, as if its heart had burst, it quivered in its death agony.

The bold rider did not flinch, even in face of this terrible misfortune.

As the horse staggered and fell, he slipped easily from the stirrups, and escaped unhurt from the fall.

Then he stood, firm and resolute, facing the foe as calmly as if he had ten thousand men at his back.

"Come on, you red demons!" he said, bitterly, under his breath. "Yell your loudest now, for more than one of you will yell his last before Buffalo Bill's scalp is taken!"

CHAPTER II.

CODY'S FIGHT FOR LIFE.

The Indians were still beyond rifle range.

They yelled again and again, with all the ferocity of their savage natures, when they saw the horse of the border king fall. Now, indeed, they felt sure of their victim.

Buffalo Bill was too far from cover to be able to reach it on foot. Long before he could get to the wooded slopes they could charge down on him and, so they fondly imagined, overwhelm him and take his scalp.

But, even in their moment of triumph, the redskins did not forget the caution habitual to their race.

They halted to breathe and rest their horses, so that

they could charge down upon the white man at full speed, and thus distract an aim which they knew full well to be deadly.

The Comanches were aware whom they were following. The dreaded "Long Hair" had fought against their tribe many a time before, and had been responsible for the death of some of their best braves.

They were willing to lose many more warriors as the price of taking his scalp, for Buffalo Bill was their most dreaded enemy, as he was of the Sioux, the Apaches and all the tribes hostile to the white men in that distant and stirring period of frontier history.

Cody saw the redskins halt, but he did not attempt to flee to the cover of the wooded hills near by. He knew that he could not reach them, and that the Comanches would instantly remount and pursue, if they saw him take a single step in that direction.

He utilized the time given him by their halt to dig a shallow pit in the sand behind his fallen horse, using his broad-bladed hunting knife for that purpose. He had soon made it deep enough to cover all but his head and shoulders, and thus give him a better protection against the arrows and bullets of the savages than the body of the horse provided.

Coolly laying his two revolvers and a handful of spare rifle cartridges on the horse's flank, the scout cocked his repeater, took a drink of water from his canteen, and waited.

"I wish Texas Jack, Wild Bill and some of the other boys were with me. They'd enjoy this fight, I reckon."

The king of the scouts was at that time in command of a strong corps of frontiersmen attached to a military expedition which had been dispatched from neighboring forts to punish the Comanche tribe for several outrages on the white settlers.

It was while he was out scouting alone, to see whether the redskins had heard of the expedition and taken the warpath against it, that his trail was picked up, and he was brought to bay and faced with the necessity of fighting for his life against such fearful odds as even he had seldom met.

The Indians, who had been holding a consultation while they rested their horses, now mounted and extended their line, so that they could surround the border king and sweep down upon him.

"They won't come in a bunch," Buffalo Bill muttered, in a tone of disappointment. "There must be a chief in command with a pretty level head. I guess it's Death

Hand. He's the cleverest brave in the tribe. He has as much sense as old Sitting Bull himself, and that's saying a lot! Well, so much the worse for me! I'll have to shoot pretty slowly, so as to be sure of hitting."

But slow shooting with Buffalo Bill was equal to very fast shooting with most men.

Extending their line, and throwing the wings forward until it assumed a crescent shape, the mounted redskins rode forward slowly. It was plain that they meant to save their horses until they got within range, when they would make a sudden and terrible rush.

Buffalo Bill counted them swiftly.

"Forty-three!" he muttered to himself, grimly. "There's luck in odd numbers!"

He watched them intently as they rode toward him.

"How coolly they take it!" he said. "They think they've got a dead-sure thing on me. Maybe they have, but I'm not so sure. I don't feel the chill on me as badly as I have in other tight places. If only some of my pards were here, or even Red Cloud and a few of his Navajos!"

Readers of former stories in the BUFFALO BILL LIBRARY may remember that Red Cloud, the war chief of the Navajos, had made the oath of blood brotherhood with the king of the scouts, and that they had been through many desperate adventures together, and saved one another's lives time and again.

Walking their ponies, the Comanches soon came so near that those on the extreme wings were within range.

As quietly as if he were picking off one buffalo out of a herd, Cody raised his rifle and drew a bead on the nearest redskin.

It was what he called slow shooting, but, as a matter of fact, he had hardly elevated the weapon before he pressed the trigger.

The Indian warrior tumbled from his horse, with the death yell on his lips.

There was another fatal shot, and then the redskins, knowing that speed only could distract his deadly aim, came down upon him at a wild gallop.

Shot after shot rang out from his rifle so fast that it seemed impossible he could be taking aim, yet at every shot a warrior went reeling from his horse.

Still they came on, undismayed and yelling at the top of their voices, firing as they came. Their aim, however, was so poor that when, at last, the king of the scouts dropped his rifle and seized a revolver in each hand, he was still unharmed.

But now twenty of the Comanche braves were close

upon him, furious with the desire for vengeance for the losses he had inflicted upon them.

With a shout as loud as their wildest cry, the heroic scout rose from the little pit he had dug for himself, with a revolver in either hand.

Standing on the body of his dead horse, he poured a deadly fire upon the rapidly advancing savages.

Even this did not stop the onslaught of the Comanches. They seemed intent on taking his life, even if only one of their number remained alive to do it.

On they came, some falling, but others dashing to the front to take the place of the dead and wounded.

Now, indeed, it seemed that Buffalo Bill was doomed.

He felt the stinging pain of a wound in his side, where a bullet struck him, luckily only plowing a bad graze in the flesh, without doing any more serious injury.

At the same instant he heard wild yells and shouts close in his rear.

A cry in the Navajo tongue told him that help had come in his moment of sorest need.

Obedient to a loud warning shout, he fell prone in his little rifle pit.

He had scarcely done so, when a shower of rifle bullets whizzed over his head, sweeping down the Comanches as they halted, panic-stricken, at the sight of the foes who had appeared with a suddenness which seemed like magic, but which was really due to the fact that they had been too much absorbed in the fight to notice their approach.

Lying flat on the ground, Buffalo Bill saw a score of red forms leaping past and over him. He heard a few scattering shots and crashing blows, and then the dreadful "scalp cries" of the Navajos told him that the Comanches, in the very moment of their anticipated victory over him, had met with defeat and death.

He staggered to his feet, bleeding from the wound in his side, and found himself face to face with his "blood brother," Red Cloud, a tall and fine-looking young chief, the pride and glory of the Navajo tribe, over which he ruled.

Red Cloud's warriors, to the number of more than twenty, were busy scalping the dead Comanches. It seemed as if not one of Buffalo Bill's foes had escaped in that sudden charge of the Navajos to his rescue.

"Greeting, Long Hair!" exclaimed the young Navajo chieftain, grasping Cody warmly by the hand. "Your brothers, the Navajos, were just in time to save you from these dogs!"

"It's not the first time I have to thank you for saving

my life, Red Cloud," said the border king, gratefully, using the Navajo's own language. "But there was never a closer shave. Tell me, how did you happen to arrive here just in the nick of time? Your hunting grounds are not in this part of the country. Your lodges are far distant—unless you have moved them since last I visited you."

"One of my young bucks was out hunting, and he met an Apache, who told him that the white soldiers were going to move out from their forts against the Comanches," Red Cloud replied. "I got together a war party at once, and was riding to offer help to the big chief of the soldiers. The Navajos have no love for the Comanches. Red Cloud would like to take many of their scalps."

"Well, you've made a pretty good beginning," said Buffalo Bill, looking around him at the prostrate bodies of his dead foes. "But there is no time to delay. We must ride into the camp of the soldiers, and report that the Comanches are already on the warpath. It is hopeless, it seems, to try to take them by surprise. If a stray Apache can have heard the news, as you say, it must be common talk. The secret is out—indeed, it can never have been properly kept."

"Ugh!" exclaimed Red Cloud, in a tone of the deepest disgust. "The white soldiers can never hide their plans, any more than they can hide their footprints. The tale of their doings is carried to every wigwam long before they can move to act. It is a wonder that they ever find the red man when they seek for him!"

Buffalo Bill laughed. He knew very well, in his inmost heart, that the white soldiers would have little success in their campaigns against the redskins if it were not for the aid of such frontiersmen as himself—men used to fighting the Indians in their own way.

"Red Cloud," he said, as he vaulted on the back of a horse which one of the Navajos brought for him, "I owe you my life. The Great Spirit surely sent you. It was not written that my scalp should be lifted this time. Some day I will try to pay you the debt I owe you."

"My brother Long Hair owes me nothing," said the gallant young chief. "He is the friend of the Navajos. He has led them in their great hunts—he has fought for them in their wars—he has saved the life of Red Cloud more than once. The Navajos will fight for Long Hair while grass grows or water runs."

The chief called his warriors in to him, for they had now finished lifting the scalps of their enemies. He gave

orders to mount and resume the journey, under the guidance of Buffalo Bill.

The horses were brought up from the rear, where they had been left when the Navajo band crept forward over a ridge to see who was firing the many shots which they had heard as they were riding along over the plain.

Buffalo Bill's wound was quickly dressed by Red Cloud, and then he rode with the others in the direction of the camp where the soldiers were stopping to await the reports as to the location of the Comanches which were to be brought in by himself and other scouts.

The rest of the Comanche war party were too much disheartened, when they reached the battleground, to care to follow up the victorious Navajos.

Late that night Buffalo Bill and his red friends rode into the camp of the soldiers, and the king of the scouts at once sought out the leader of the expedition, Col. James Kent, and made his report to him.

At the same time he suggested that Red Cloud's Navajos be attached to the body of frontiersmen, under his command, and used for scouting duty, to which the colonel cheerfully agreed.

CHAPTER III.

BUFFALO BILL MEETS THE MAD WIZARD.

Buffalo Bill found that reports of several other outrages by the Comanches had been received at the camp while he was away, and the soldiers were keen to take vengeance on the tribe.

"Surely the Great Spirit has made these men mad!" exclaimed Red Cloud, scornfully, as he listened to the talk of some of the young officers, standing by the side of the chief of the scouts. "They want to march straight into the Comanche country and fight. They do not seem to think that they may be ambushed and slain. They laugh when you tell them that there must be careful scouting before they can advance.

"Do they think that the Comanches are children, who know nothing of war? Their talk is the talk of fools! Red Cloud's heart is sad with the fear that many scalps of his white friends will be lifted."

"It is our business to prevent that, chief," said the border king, in reply. "We must see that plenty of good scouting is done, and that the Comanches don't get us in a trap. They have a clever chief in Death Hand. He is one of the best leaders I know. By the way, was he

killed in that fight we had with them? I did not look to see, as I ought to have done."

"No; Death Hand still lives," said the Navajo. "I told one of my young men to look in the face of each dead brave. He knows Death Hand, for he has visited his village, and he told me that the Comanche chief was not among the slain. He must have been able to get away in the confusion of our charge and ride back to his braves who did not take part in the fight, as their ponies were slower than the rest. I thought we had slain them all, but he escaped."

"That is a pity, for he is the most dangerous man among the Comanches," the border king remarked, regretfully.

"My brother is mistaken," said the Navajo. "It is true that Death Hand is a great chief, but there is a more powerful man among the Comanches."

"Is that so?" Cody exclaimed, in surprise. "I thought he was the paramount chief among them."

"That is true," Red Cloud replied; "but, nevertheless, there is one man who has even greater power in the tribe."

"And who is he?"

"A mad medicine man—a wizard—whom they call 'Evil Spirit.' He is not a Comanche, but a Sioux, as I have heard. Yet the Comanches have adopted him into their tribe, and hold him in the greatest honor. He is said to have white blood in his veins, but he hates the whites worse than any full-blooded Indian does. He has used his great power over the tribe to stir up this present fight, I expect."

"But why is he so powerful among the Comanches?" Buffalo Bill asked. "It seems strange, especially as he is not one of them, but only a half-breed Sioux."

"He is a wonderful man," the Navajo replied. "They tell many stories about him round the camp fires, when the pipe of peace is being smoked.

"In stature he is a giant, and his strength is as the strength of ten men. The Great Spirit has made him mad, but he has made him cunning and crafty, as well. He is skillful in war and in council. He knows all the arts of the medicine men, and there is no man among the Comanches who dares to cross him."

"He's a dangerous man," remarked the border king. "Our campaign won't be a complete success unless we capture him or kill him. He ought not to be left at large to stir up more trouble."

Little did Buffalo Bill think, as he said these words, how soon the time would come when he would experience in deadly fashion the terrible prowess of the man wizard of the Comanches.

* * * * *

On the day following this conversation between Cody and the Navajo chieftain the colonel in command of the expedition gave orders for an advance to be made into the Comanche country.

It was a perilous business, for the column, which numbered nearly a thousand men, had to pass through wooded country and through canyons that wound in and out among a mass of small hills.

Cody and his band of scouts, which included, besides the Navajos, those famous borderers, Texas Jack, Wild Bill Hickok and old Nick Wharton, were busy reconnoitering in advance of the slowly moving column of troops. They did not mean to let the command fall into a Comanche ambush if they could help it.

The object of the expedition was to surprise the chief village of the Comanches, but there was danger that it might itself be surprised in some narrow defile on the way.

Buffalo Bill mounted to the summit of one of the hills, and walked along the edge of a cliff which frowned down on a canyon beneath, through which the column of troops was slowly passing.

He looked about him keenly for traces of the hostiles, but for some time he could see none.

Then, as he passed round some jagged rocks on the very edge of the cliff, he came suddenly face to face with one of the strangest and most weirdly impressive figures he had ever seen.

It was the figure of a gigantic Indian, who held a huge rock poised aloft in his hands.

He was evidently about to fling it down upon the soldiers who were passing in the canyon below.

In the instant that he caught sight of him, it flashed upon the mind of Buffalo Bill that here was the mysterious madman whom Red Cloud had spoken of as "Evil Spirit," the wizard and medicine man of the Comanches.

"Drop that stone upon the soldiers, and you die!"

The Indian turned, at these threatening words, and faced the leveled revolver of the king of the scouts.

Buffalo Bill saw that the giant had, indeed, white blood in him, as Red Cloud had said, although his skin was as dusky as that of most Indians.

He was a wild creature, of Herculean size and intense ferocity of expression. His strange, rugged face was seamed with many lines that told of the cruelty of his heart, and the wild, bright light in his restless eyes showed plainly enough, even at a casual glance, that he was mad.

As he looked straight at the muzzle of Cody's threatening revolver, the madman hesitated.

It seemed for a moment that he would defy the scout and send the stone hurtling down into the canyon on its mission of death.

But his fierce eyes took in the calm, determined scrutiny of the king of the scouts, and he saw in that fearless face indomitable will and undaunted nerve.

Quick as a flash, his look of ferocity turned to one of cunning.

His eyes lost their fierceness of expression, and drooped before the commanding gaze of Buffalo Bill.

He turned, lowered the rock to the ground without any seeming effort, despite its huge size, and faced the man who had cowed him, standing like a man utterly subdued by a mightier will than his own.

His cruel mouth grinned, his features twitched, his form trembled convulsively, and he said, in a deep voice, in the Comanche tongue.

"Rash paleface, why do you seek to stay the arm of the Mad Avenger?"

Buffalo Bill did not reply to this strange question. He merely told the man, in the Indian language, that he must accompany him as his prisoner.

It had occurred to him that, if the maniac was held in such high honor as Red Cloud had indicated, he might prove to be a very useful hostage, far more valuable alive than dead.

Nevertheless, he hesitated whether it would not be better to shoot him, for he realized that if the fellow showed fight it would be extremely difficult to carry him along as a captive.

The maniac wore in his belt a pair of large revolvers and an enormous knife, and that he would use them the scout did not for a moment doubt.

Powerful as he himself was, and active and quick, Buffalo Bill did not care for a test of strength with one who had raised that enormous rock above his head as if it had been but a few pounds in weight.

So, all things considered, the scout felt that he must use strategy with the madman, and not force or weapons.

He gazed at him with the deepest interest. Fully six feet six in height, he was, with massive shoulders, limbs

large and rigid with muscles, and weighing fully two hundred and thirty pounds, yet of perfect form from head to foot—a veritable Hercules.

His face, the hue of leather and as hardened, was cast in a noble mold, the features being perfect, though the eyes were intensely fierce, and the expression of the face was cruelly stern and determined.

The garb of this strange being was scant, consisting of a bearskin hunting shirt, leaving the arms exposed from the shoulders, and leggins of undressed deerskin, while buffalo-hide moccasins covered his feet and a foxskin cap covered his head.

His hair was unkempt and worn long, and there were streaks of gray in his flowing locks.

A rope sufficed for a belt about his waist, and in this his weapons were stuck without holsters.

Such was the wild being that Buffalo Bill now had to deal with—whom he must subdue by strategy or a bullet, not by mere physical strength.

With such a prisoner as this madman, Buffalo Bill felt that he was in an awkward position.

The giant's strength was to be feared, and, as he would probably also be quick in the use of weapons, he was an ugly customer to handle.

True, Cody felt that he could kill him with a single quick shot, but his was not the nature to take life unless imperative necessity compelled.

If he shot the man down, he would doubtless be doing mankind a favor, for the maniac was an avowed hater of all white men.

Still, the scout wished not to try conclusions of a deadly strife with the man, but preferred to take him to the command a prisoner, if he could do so.

For once Buffalo Bill had met one man whom there was reason for him to dread, powerful as he was in physical strength and the deadliest of dead shots; but he knew not fear. He only felt that he must be cautious in handling a man who was dangerous as a wild beast in the jungle.

Who was the mysterious creature? What was his history?

In his life in that part of the country the scout had not heard of him, save from the few words spoken by Red Cloud.

Cody bade his prisoner precede him back from the cliff, holding him under cover of his revolver.

The man obeyed, with an humble manner and the look of one who was utterly crushed.

He seemed to realize that he had met his match, and

went along at the scout's bidding, with no show of resistance.

Back from the cliff a quarter of a mile they came to where Buffalo Bill had left his horse.

He ordered the man to halt near the animal, and, fearful lest he might break away from him, forcing him to fire, Buffalo Bill decided to bind him with his lariat.

So far he had not disarmed him, but, turning to him, he did so, lifting the revolvers and knife from the man's belt.

Then he took the coiled lariat from his saddle horn, and bade the man place his hands behind him.

The giant made no resistance at being disarmed, but stood with drooped head and downcast eyes.

Twice the scout ordered him to put his hands behind him before he obeyed; then he started, gave a sigh, and did so.

Buffalo Bill stepped behind him to bind his hands together, and to do so had to place his revolver in his belt.

Then, quick as a flash, the giant form leaped backward, the force felling Buffalo Bill to the ground, and, with the celerity of a tiger's spring, he was upon the scout.

Buffalo Bill rallied with great nerve, and as quickly as had been the movement of his foe.

He had no time to draw a weapon, so grasped the man with all his force, and at once began the desperate fight for mastery.

It was, indeed, a battle of giants.

Never among the men with whom he had come in contact—and some of them, too, were giants—had Buffalo Bill met his master.

The maniac was quicker, stronger and more wiry than those with whom he had tested his strength.

Cody had fought for life time and again, writhing in deadly combat with redskin and desperado, and had always been the victor.

He had been the king of all athletic sports among his fellows, and his powers of endurance were phenomenal.

But now he felt that he had met one whose sinews were of steel and bones were of iron.

His flesh was as hard as the bark of a tree, and, when Buffalo Bill was able to get in now and then one of his terrible blows full upon the man's head, it did not seem to harm him in the least degree.

Over and over they rolled, the scout trying in vain to grasp the revolvers and knife in his belt, the madman seeming not to care for either.

The latter struck no blow, did not seek to clutch the

throat of the scout in his iron grip—only fought to conquer by mere strength and endurance.

The minutes passed away, and still the giants fought—the maniac for his life, for the scout would have killed him now if he could, and Buffalo Bill for mastery.

But human endurance has its limit, and at last the size, weight and iron strength of the madman triumphed.

Buffalo Bill had met his master in a struggle for victory.

CHAPTER IV.

CODY A PRISONER.

There was one thing Buffalo Bill had taken note of through the whole terrible ordeal of his death struggle with the huge foe he was battling with, and that was that the man did not appear to wish to kill him, or to harm him seriously.

Several times the scout had noticed that he had been at the mercy of the giant, as far as a death blow was concerned, for the Hercules had it in his power to kill, had he wished.

But this he did not do; and, when at last Buffalo Bill could struggle no longer and was helpless, the giant did not strike, but drew toward him the scout's lariat and secured him with it.

Then he sat down to rest, for he, too, was panting like a hard-run hound.

He gazed with curiosity upon his enemy, mingled with admiration at his great strength, and seemed to realize that it had been the battle of his life; that never before had he met one whom he could not handle as he would a child.

After resting for many minutes, he rose to his feet, and glanced about him.

Buffalo Bill had rested, also, but his broad chest still heaved convulsively, and he gazed at his enemy with curiosity not devoid of anxiety as to his next move, for the scout remembered that the soldiers were marching on to attack the Indian village, and he was fearful that a warning might be sent to the redskins of their danger, for certainly this wild rover of the mountains must be their ally—the mad wizard.

When he felt himself again, the madman took hold of the lariat that bound the scout, unbound his feet, and said, in the Comanche tongue:

"Get up!"

The scout did so.

"Come with me!"

"Where?"

"To death!"

Such an ominous reply would have unnerved many a man utterly, but Buffalo Bill said, in an indifferent tone:

"So you are going to kill me, eh?"

"I am going to leave you to die."

"Why?"

"You are my foe."

"We never met before."

"You are a white soldier."

"Well, for the sake of argument, I'll admit it, as I belong to the army."

"Then you are my sworn foe."

"I do not just see how. You are not a Comanche?"

"I hate white men; I slay them whenever it is in my power, so you shall die!"

"How have I ever wronged you?"

"You are a white soldier."

"A scout, more properly speaking."

"You belong to the army."

"I am proud to say that I do."

"Then you must die!"

"Why did you not kill me when it was in your power to do so?"

"I saved you for a worse fate than sudden death."

"Ah! And what?"

"I have seen an army of soldiers go by in the canyon."

"Granted."

"They have but one motive."

"Well?"

"It is to attack the village of the red men who are my friends. But I must not linger here, for I have work to do."

"Lead on, for, as I can do nothing else, I will follow."

"No; you will remain here."

"All right; I have no say in the matter."

"I shall tie you to a tree—that tree yonder, beyond all chance of escape."

"Well?"

"I will leave you there, while I take your horse and weapons."

"To the victor belongs the spoils," was the scout's indifferent response.

"I seldom mount a horse, for I am fleet of foot and have the strength to endure; but your horse shall bear me up a valley where I know a trail that will shorten the dis-

tance to the Indian village. See, I tell you all, for I am sure of your death!"

"You are very kind."

"Your horse will save me a twenty-mile run, and I shall ride him hard, ride him until he drops dead, and then I shall run on my way on foot, and reach the Comanches' village in time to warn them of danger."

"And what will you do with me?"

"I will leave you here, bound to that tree, to await the retreat of the soldiers; then I will bring the Comanches here, to show them that I am, indeed, their friend—that I have captured their terrible foe, Long Hair."

"You have the advantage of me in more ways than one, for you know me."

"Yes, I know you as Long Hair, one whom the Comanches fear as they do the Evil Spirit—one whom they have long wished to capture. They will come and find you here, and will take you to their village, where you will be burned at the stake."

A fearful prospect, surely. But how is it that you know me?"

"There is but one Long Hair, and you are that one. Now, as I cannot lose time by taking you with me, I will see that you are here when I return for you."

It was useless to resist, so Buffalo Bill calmly submitted to be bound to a tree in such a way that to free himself was impossible, for his back was placed against it and his hands stretched back and tied tightly, his feet then being made fast.

He uttered no word, no appeal, and saw the giant maniac mount his splendid horse and dash away at a speed to kill, leaving him alone and a prey to the terrible thoughts that could not but crowd upon him.

CHAPTER V.

A TERRIBLE ORDEAL.

As Buffalo Bill saw the man ride away like the wind, he knew that he would keep his threat and ride his noble horse to death, in his determination to warn the redskins of the coming attack of the soldiers.

The scout did not, however, break down with despair, and, in spite of his own suffering and danger, he thought of his comrades.

"That man will warn the redskins, and Col. Kent and his command will march into a trap.

"The giant is a fiend, and he will lead the Indians to wipe out the command, if it is in their power. Though I

do not believe they can do that, the soldiers will suffer terribly in the retreat.

"And I am left here, unable to aid or to warn them. By thunder, but I'm unable to aid myself!" and the scout's face was illumined by a grim smile as he uttered the words.

The situation was a novel one. Hitherto the victor, he was, for once, the vanquished. What was more, he was left to his own bitter meditations over the untoward fortune of his capture.

If he could only release himself, he would be able to overtake the command, for he could trot along like an Indian for half a day without tiring.

Once warned that he could not surprise the Indian village, the colonel was too good a soldier to go on, but would alter his plans and attack more cautiously.

Tugging at his bonds, Buffalo Bill only found how thoroughly secured they were.

The madman, as he regarded him, had been only too expert in binding him, and a team of horses could not have broken the rawhide lasso.

Once he was sure of this, the scout began to consider his own case.

He was certainly in a very desperate situation, for, once the madman had warned the redskin village, he would return to him, and not alone. He would come with foes, whom the scout had every reason to dread.

More, he would come with braves who would harass every foot of the trail the soldiers retreated by, and maybe destroy the whole command in detail.

The day wore away, and the sun glared in the face of the bound scout as it neared the horizon. A huge snake crawled by, near him, going to his night den, and, as twilight fell, a wolf howled dismally not far away, as though calling his mates to a feast of human flesh.

The scout still stood against the tree, his hands and feet swelling under the tightening ropes, and his body becoming racked with pain from the impeded circulation of his blood.

Darkness came on, and the hoot of an owl in a tree near by sounded doubly dismal to the suffering victim.

Then there came another long howl of a wolf, and it was answered from afar by the sharper yelp of a coyote.

An hour more passed, and the chorus of the wolves had begun in earnest.

The howling of the finder of a feast of human flesh had brought answer from all sides, and, as the night wore

on, there was heard the yelping of hungry animals from every direction.

Buffalo Bill had known wood, forest and prairie all his life, and never had he felt dread of wolves before. He had slept alone upon the plain and in the mountains countless times, without an atom of apprehension; but there he was free to defend himself; now he was bound and helpless!

He began to feel that the ravenous wolves would attack him as soon as they felt that he was at their mercy.

A single shot might have sent them flying: a brand of burning wood thrown into their midst would have sent them scampering away, but now, alas, he was at their mercy!

They grew bolder and bolder, and at last came so near that he could see their eyes glittering.

Then he uttered a wild shout, and off they ran, but not to go far. They quickly returned and sat on their haunches, howling in chorus, as if chanting a death chant.

"It is a question of time only," the prisoner muttered. "But to be torn to pieces by their sharp teeth is no worse than being tormented to death—in fact, not so bad." And the scout awaited his death with grim fortitude.

The night wore on, until at last Buffalo Bill felt that it was only a question of a few minutes more. He closed his eyes—to open them suddenly, as, with startled yelps, the wolves dashed away.

What had caused their flight the scout soon ascertained.

Some one was approaching!

He listened intently, and soon his wonderfully quick ears caught the sound of several men moving stealthily toward him through the darkness.

Were they Comanches, or his own friends?

The chief of the scouts waited calmly, without even a twitch of the lips, for this question to be determined. It meant to him either life or the most horrible of deaths, but he did not tremble or flinch any more than an Indian chief would have done when bound to the stake.

Soon the question was answered, and in his favor, by the sudden rushing up of Wild Bill, Texas Jack and half a dozen other members of the band of scouts under Cody's command.

They exclaimed loudly, with wonder, when they saw their leader tied to the tree.

"We were scouting around to see if we could find you, as you didn't show up," said Wild Bill, cutting him loose. "We were afraid you must have fallen in with some of

the redskins and got the worst of it. We heard the wolves yelping, and hurried up, for we thought some one must be in danger, if not you. But we came cautiously, for we didn't know but what we might stumble into a camp of the durned red varmints. How did it all happen?"

Buffalo Bill told the story of his meeting with the madman, briefly and hurriedly.

"We must hasten to the colonel," he said. "That maniac has sense enough to arrange for the ambushing of the column further on. I reckon, and we must warn the troops in time."

"If the soldiers are caught in one of these canyons, the slaughter will be terrible," said Texas Jack, who was at that time a scout hardly second in skill and fame even to Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill.

"Right you are, pard," said Buffalo Bill. "Forward's the word, and at the best of our speed, too. We must warn the colonel before it is too late."

"But, as we go along, we had better scout out and see if we can get any idea of the movements of the redskins," observed Wild Bill. "If we can find out where they are preparing their ambush, so much the better. They are hardly likely to bring off their attack before daylight, for they will have to fire down from the top of the cliffs, and they could not see to do that in the dark."

"Good!" said Buffalo Bill. "Have you any horses with you?"

"Yes; they are tethered a little way back," replied Wild Bill. "We brought along a spare one for you to ride, in case we found you, as we reckoned we would."

In a few moments the scouts had all mounted and were riding on through the darkness to discover the ambush of the redskins and warn the soldiers of their danger.

CHAPTER VI.

EVIL SPIRIT WARNS THE COMANCHES.

When the mad wizard turned away from Buffalo Bill his face was that of a demon, so full was it of triumph and hatred.

He had leaped upon the horse of the scout, after having thrust his revolvers and bowie knife into his own belt. With the rifle of Buffalo Bill slung at his back, he started off at a gallop on a trail with which he seemed to be thoroughly acquainted.

Reaching the valley, there was the large trail left by the passing soldiers, and, riding rapidly on, the madman

dashed through the long canyon, coming out some twenty minutes behind the rear end of the command.

Then he branched off sharply to the left, and rode ahead at a long, sweeping gallop for miles.

Buffalo Bill's horse was a large, long-bodied, strong animal, with great speed and endurance, but, after half a score of miles had been gone over, under the extra weight of the madman, his weapons and the arms of the scout added, he began to feel the strain.

But he was not spared, but still urged on at the same killing pace, until a score of miles had been left behind him.

The command had been passed by far to the right, darkness was near at hand, and yet the madman still urged the now tired animal on.

Before him rose a range of hills, and straight toward it he rode.

He was in a valley to the left of the command, which apparently stopped at the range, there being no visible gap through it.

Darkness came on, but still the madman urged his horse, now only able to keep up a slow canter.

This came down to a trot as another mile was passed over, and, as the range was reached, the animal's strength failed utterly.

Leaping from his back, the madman took off the saddle and bridle and turned him loose.

There he stood, unable to move and panting violently.

But the rider had no mercy for him, and, shouldering the bridle and saddle, started off straight up the side of the range.

A climb of half a mile, and he came to a narrow break in the range.

Here he halted, laid down the saddle and bridle and weapons of the scout, tightened his belt, and then started off through the narrow canyon at a long, running gait that would carry him along at a seven-mile pace an hour on level land.

The canyon was a long and winding one, but came out upon the other side of the range and overlooking a valley.

The darkness of the night did not for a moment check the madman's speed, for he bounded down the mountain side with great leaps, reached the valley, and again kept up his swift and steady gait for miles.

Then he began to ascend another range.

He seemed untiring, and never once paused for rest.

An hour's climb brought him to the summit, and there he beheld a striking and picturesque scene.

It was a valley in the summit of the mountain range, and through the valley bounded a stream.

Upon each side of the stream, for several miles, glimmered camp fires, and their light revealed a hundred tepees.

It was the Indian village where dwelt the Comanches, under their leader, Death Hand, a bitter foe to the whites.

Down the slope into the valley ran the madman, passing Indian braves here and there, who gazed at him with awe, while, as he dashed by the tepees, women and children fled from him in terror.

All seemed to know him, and, half-breed Sioux though he was, all greeted him with reverence.

Seeming to know his way, he ran on toward a cliff, at the base of which was some timber, among which were half a dozen large tepees.

A bright fire burned before one, and there were gathered half a dozen chiefs, one of whom, a very tall, sinewy redskin, was decked out in all the regalia of a paramount chief.

"The Evil Spirit!" cried a number of voices as the madman dashed up to the group.

"Yes, the Evil Spirit I am, and come to warn you that the paleface braves, five hundred or more strong, are marching upon the village, and are to attack you when the light drives the darkness away, by hurling iron from their wheel guns into your midst.

"You have no time to fight them, but must hasten at once further into the mountains, and strike them before their retreat, for I will tell you where, when and how.

"The Evil Spirit has spoken," and the madman, having spoken in the Comanche tongue, folded his arms calmly upon his broad breast, heaving violently from his long and rapid run.

It was evident that the giant madman held influence in the Indian tribe, from the manner in which the chiefs who heard his words regarded him.

They seemed to stand in awe of him, and even the mighty chief, Death Hand, was most respectful in his manner of addressing him.

"The Evil Spirit is welcome to my village. He brings tidings to frighten most of my women and children, though my young braves know no fear of their paleface foe. But he tells me what my warriors do not know, and my scouts are abroad always."

"Then your scouts are asleep, or so intent on hunting

that they do not know what the palefaces are doing," was the reply. "I tell you, chief, that not four hours ago I passed the paleface warriors, on ponies, on foot, with wheel guns, crawling like some great rattlesnake through the mountains to attack your village.

"I saw your dread foe, Long Hair, the paleface man of many scalps. We fought. I was his master. I bound him with his own lariat to a tree to await the return of our warriors and give him to them to burn at the stake.

"Then I took his horse, and rode on after the crawling serpent of the palefaces.

"I passed them by, came on to the further range, left the horse of the paleface, and ran on foot here to tell you of your foes' coming.

"I tell you now you have no time to fight them, for they will kill your young men and destroy your village.

"Retreat at once where they dare not follow you. Leave your tepees standing, throw wood on your camp fires, and let them find, when they arrive, a deserted village.

"Take your women and children, your old people, crippled and sick, to a place of safety, mount your bravest warriors on their best ponies, flank around and head off the retreating palefaces at the head of the pass; strike swiftly and surely, and you will hear a wail of anguish from the palefaces whose echoes shall not be silenced for many moons.

"The Spirit of Evil has spoken. He is silent, but he, for one, will not die impassive before the wheel guns of the white devils whom he hates!"

A murmur of appreciation ran through the assemblage as the madman ceased his impressive speech. Without hesitation, the chief responded:

"The Evil Spirit has spoken well. He is the brother of my people. His words shall be obeyed.

"Let the alarm be given. My people must move at once. We will retreat to the secret ambush in the mountains."

The camp almost at once became a scene of feverish activity.

The cattle, stolen from the whites, were driven rapidly up the trail, followed by the women and children, who were intrusted with the pack animals loaded with such store of provisions and household goods as the hurried order of the chief permitted to be removed.

Evil Spirit rode side by side with Death Hand. As the two swung along in advance of the cavalcade of their followers, they laid out their plan of action.

To the superstitious redskins the voice of Evil Spirit,

on whom they believed the affliction of the gods had been laid, was as law. Nor was this his only title to their respect.

They knew him not only as a maniac, but also as a powerful medicine man.

His strange habits and solitary vigils in the loneliest parts of the mountains marked him to the tribe as something more than human. To them he was the Heaven-appointed scourge of the hated whites.

The plan of Evil Spirit, to which Chief Death Hand listened as they rode along, was simple. It was to tell off the bands of braves, under various chiefs, and dash boldly on to the attack. Then he, Evil Spirit, would guide them to one of the places of ambush he knew, and show them where the force of the whites could be struck at without any danger to themselves.

The great chief heard and was pleased. He called his head braves about him, and gave them their orders. By sunrise they were to have their warriors ready to move to the place of ambush agreed upon between himself and the Spirit of Evil.

So it was that early dawn saw two thousand painted and feathered braves on the march for the pass. The women and children and such of the camp paraphernalia as was not needed had already been sent to hidden fastnesses in the mountains, where the wily redskins well knew the soldiers dare not penetrate.

It was early afternoon when Death Hand and his terrible ally, Evil Spirit, rode up to the spot where the latter had confined Buffalo Bill.

The ponies had been left in the valley, and the redskin warriors followed their leaders on foot. All along the edges of the canyon piles of jagged rocks had been placed as missiles. The Indians, leaving scouts on watch, carefully reconnoitered, and then went back into the timber to await the call to battle. They intended to strike at the troops as they returned.

Evil Spirit was mad with rage when he found his prisoner had escaped. The footprints told him the story of the rescue plainly, but he knew it was useless to pursue.

CHAPTER VII.

RUNNING THE GANTLET.

Buffalo Bill and his brother scouts were in a serious dilemma.

Morning had dawned. They had scouted around the brow of the cliffs, carefully and cautiously, and had dis-

covered the Comanches in force in a position which the soldiers were bound to pass. From the rocks above they could open a terrible fire on the column as it passed beneath on its way back from the deserted village.

Already, from their position high above, the scouts could see the column on the move.

Col. Kent and his command would pass beneath the place where the Comanches were ambushed.

There was but one thing to do—to ride and save them.

But the position of the respective parties was such that the scouts could not reach the soldiers without running the gantlet of the redskins already lying in ambush.

It was a chance that not one man in a thousand would have taken, for it seemed to mean certain death.

There was not one of the scouts who was not a man of great bravery, as men go. Yet there was only one man in the company ready to accept that awful risk.

That man—need it be said?—was Buffalo Bill.

After taking a keen glance at the position of the two parties, he determined on the only course that was pos-

He made up his mind to either warn the soldiers of the trap they were marching into, or give his life as the price of his attempt to save them.

He had seen enough, through reconnoitering, to know that, with hundreds of redskins firing down upon the soldiers showers of arrows, rifle shots and a rain of rocks, the result in the crowd of men in the canyon would be terrible.

"Hundreds will fall, and doubtless among the first will be Col. Kent," he argued to his men.

"You see," he continued, "the Indians will have every advantage, for they cannot be reached without a ride of several miles, and all the way they can pick off the soldiers and then escape to the ridges, if, indeed, they are not in force enough to stand their ground.

"With the colonel warned, he will keep out of the trap. He can shell the cliffs with his guns, send the cavalry one way and the infantry another, and catch the redskins between two fires.

"Now, you see, pards, the Indian scouts are only watching along the cliffs, the main force being back in the timber in hiding, so I will only have the gantlet of a few shots to run."

The scouts did not see it in this way, for they knew that the few shots their chief referred to would be many before the end of the canyon was reached.

They knew that Buffalo Bill was taking deadly risks

to save the lives of others, and they admired him the more for it, though they urged him not to go.

But the scout was determined, his mind was made up, and, his horse having been brought up by one of the men, he turned to mount without further delay.

"If I go under, pards, tell the colonel I tried to do my best. I will leave my rifle, for I do not wish any extra weight to carry. Well, good-by, for I'm off."

With this, he leaped into his saddle, gathered his reins well in hand, and, with a nod, was away.

He soon shot full into view from the cliffs, but, as good luck would have it, he was not seen by the Indian scouts stationed there, as their eyes were all turned in the other direction, from which they expected the soldiers to come.

He reached the entrance to the canyon, and not until the echo of the hoofs of his horse reached their ears did the Indians discover him.

Then they were nonplused for a moment.

They had looked for no one from that direction, and at first they hardly knew what to do.

All this time Buffalo Bill was sweeping along like the wind.

Then the redskins supposed him to be a courier from the fort from which the expedition had come, carrying dispatches to the command that had been sent to attack them. Should they allow him to go by, and not attack him? By not revealing their presence, it would be easy to avoid an immediate conflict, and reserve their strength for a more favorable opportunity.

This seemed to the chiefs, after a brief consultation, to be the better plan. Accordingly, they decided to remain in ambush, and not give the alarm to Col. Kent's command.

This intention, however, was frustrated by a young brave, who, in his eagerness to ascertain the force of the enemy, revealed himself.

The quick eye of the knight of the plains, glancing upward, saw the Indian.

The opportunity was too good to be lost.

As he sped along, he raised his revolver, and, as the muzzle swung downward in the act of aiming at full gallop, he pulled the trigger.

Despite the terrific speed of his horse and the long range, the aim of the scout was sure. With a wild yell of surprise and pain, the Indian attempted to seek cover, but next moment the scout horse's bounded to one side, as the redskin, with a groan, rolled into the canyon, mortally wounded.

As he saw his enemy fall to his death the scout gave a shout of triumph, which was answered by a yell of defiance from the Indians and the rattle of a volley from their rifles.

Buffalo Bill's horse gave a bound and a whinny of pain, as a bullet lodged in his neck. A sharp, stinging pain in his shoulder apprised the scout that he himself had not escaped unscathed. He realized, however, that the wound was slight.

His horse answered nobly to the touch of his spurs, and, as they dashed along, the Indian scouts began to fire on them from the cliffs.

The redskins were determined to stop the progress of the bold scout.

Arrows whizzed past him, bullets rattled in showers about his head, and in their desperate efforts to kill or cripple him the Indians even hurled great rocks down into the canyon.

The knight of the plains seemed, however, to bear a charmed life. At last he shot, unscathed by the missiles of his enemies, round a bend and into full view of those whom he had risked his life to save.

His horse had been hit several times by bullets, and two arrows hanging to his haunches showed that the redskins' missiles had sped true.

At last one arrow flew straight to the heart of the horse Buffalo Bill rode.

As the animal staggered and seemed about to fall in a heap beneath him, the king of the scouts realized that his mount had received its death wound.

The moment was a desperate one.

The border king drove his spurs deep into the flanks of his wounded horse. The noble animal answered to the touch and plunged forward.

The terrific effort of the wounded, dying beast saved the scout's life.

As he reached the end of the terrible gantlet of death which he had run, the cheers of the soldiers rang loud in his ears.

Buffalo Bill had once more defeated his redskin foes, and saved Col. Kent's command from what had seemed almost certain annihilation.

"Bravo, Cody!" he cried. "You ran the gantlet in great style! But for you, we would have been caught in a trap!"

"There are more than a thousand braves in the cliffs there, hidden back in the timber!" gasped the scout. "They can't ambush you now, but they will try to pick off your men, one by one, unless you drive them out of their cover with the field guns."

"Good!" exclaimed the colonel.

He turned to a young officer who was riding by his side.

"Tell Major Roy to unlimber the guns and get to work on those cliffs at once," he added.

The aid-de-camp galloped away.

Soon the gunners had their orders, and the light field guns, pointed, by the direction of Buffalo Bill, at the places where the Indians were concealed in greatest numbers, began to roar and send out their dread messengers of death.

The shells flew over the cliff, bursting in the timber beyond. They rained death into the midst of the redskins and their ponies alike, and soon the survivors were seen in full flight.

Then the guns were taken to another position, from which they could shell the braves as they fled.

The soldiers, dismounting from their horses, began to climb, by a succession of ridges, up the face of the cliff, with the hope of taking the redskins on the flank and turning their retreat into a hopeless rout.

They fired as they advanced, and the Indians were rapidly driven back, losing many of their number.

Soon they were in full flight, but they did not find it so easy to get safely away as they had anticipated.

Buffalo Bill guided a small force of mounted men, at a swift canter, up a narrow trail to the brow of the cliff, and they rode down the redskins and slaughtered them by the dozen.

Within an hour the battle was won. The Indians had sustained a terrible loss, which made the small list of casualties sustained by Col. Kent's command seem trifling.

The cleverly laid plot of the mad wizard of the Comanches had come to nothing!

* * * * *

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MAD WIZARD AGAIN.

The first man to grasp Buffalo Bill's hand, as he dashed up to the head of the column, was Col. Kent himself.

For the greater part of the day the pursuit of the fleeing redskins was kept up, and the Navajos who had allied themselves to Buffalo Bill's scouts were foremost in it.

While the scout had a Comanche was sent to the happy hunting grounds before night fell.

But when the last squad of cavalry returned from the pursuit the sun set.

There Kent gave the order to camp for the night, but as one man in the column who felt that his work was just begun.

The headboard wonder whether Cody ever sleeps?" said an officer,

At one saw the border king mount his horse and ride away in the darkness.

the fifth at can he be after now, in Heaven's name?" wondered a young lieutenant, who was smoking an after-

brimmed pipe with the first speaker. "The Comanches their gray horse. What more is there to do? It is simply a

Though of following them up at our leisure and punish the large knim."

and he guess Cody doesn't think it's so simple as that," said the other. "He's going to follow their trail, and see whether they are really routed, or whether they will rally and get ready for another fight."

This was a good guess. It was precisely the mission which the king of the scouts had undertaken.

By a winding path, Cody found his way to the summit of the cliffs, and followed the broad trail along which the redskins had fled a few hours before in so much terror.

Soon he came into a thick wood, and was forced to dismount from his horse and light a small lantern which he had brought with him to help him in following the trail without waiting for the daylight.

The faithful steed followed a few paces behind him.

Buffalo Bill turned the light of the lantern upon the ground, and was intent upon reading the signs so plainly written there.

So intent, indeed, was he that he saw nothing of a figure crouching in the dark shadows cast by the trees near by.

It was the figure of the mad wizard of the Comanches.

The maniac, maddened by the failure of his plans during the day, had lingered around the scene of the battle, hoping for a chance to wreak some small vengeance, even though the tribe to which he had linked his fortunes had been defeated.

He had seen the scout's form, and, as the glare of the lantern fell upon his face, he was not ten feet from him, and, crouching like a wild beast about to spring upon its prey.

The flash of the lantern revealed the features of Buf-

falo Bill. There could be no mistake, for the face of the scout was one that, once seen, could never be forgotten.

As he recognized who it was that the rays of the lantern had discovered to him, the maniac uttered a loud and evil cry.

With the bound of a tiger that springs upon its helpless prey, he leaped on the back of the scout.

A terrible blow crashed on the scout's head, and he dropped, senseless, on the ground.

The mad wizard, who had before proven such a terrible foe to Buffalo Bill, stooped over the prostrate figure of the scout, and, taking his lariat, securely bound his hands behind his back.

His next move was to take Buffalo Bill's large sombrero, and, filling it with water, dash it into his face, with the muttered words:

"I hope he is not dead!"

Though still half dazed from the terrific blow the wizard had struck him, Buffalo Bill still retained sufficient consciousness to realize the identity of his captor.

Not caring for a repetition of the sudden shower bath to which the Evil Spirit had treated him, he sat bolt upright, and said:

"No, I am not dead, and I only wish I had let you know the fact a moment sooner."

"Not dead! I am glad, indeed, of that," said the mad giant, with a growl.

"Why?"

"Because I hope to have the joy of seeing you die by torture!"

If the wizard of the Comanches had anticipated that his words would unnerve the scout, he was mistaken.

In perfectly cool tones, Cody replied:

"No doubt. You had me foul once before, but I am still on the earth."

The mad medicine man started angrily at this.

"How did you get free?" he asked, furiously.

"Guess," was the cool response.

The madman raised his hand.

For a moment it looked as if he was about to strike his helpless captive. Then he lowered his fist. He had evidently changed his mind.

"No, not yet," he muttered. "I can wait. The time has not yet come."

There was something in the calm malignance with which the words were uttered that made their import terrible. The scout did not reply, however. The mad

giant mused for a moment, and then, turning abruptly, exclaimed:

"There is much that you can tell me. Mount the horse, and, as we go along, I will question you. Your horse is killed. You may ride mine. I will walk."

"Where are we going?"

"You will see," was the laconic reply.

Once more the scout remained silent. He was studying the nature of his captor. That he was really insane, the border king felt convinced. As he realized this, the thought struck him that he might be able to play on the man's mental aberration in a way that might eventually prove of advantage to himself.

With this thought in his mind, the scout arose, as best he could for his bonds, and asked the aid of the wizard to mount his horse.

This assistance was given in an unexpected way. The mad giant stooped, and, placing his arms about the border king's powerful frame, placed him in the saddle as easily as one would mount a child.

"You are the most muscular man I ever saw!" exclaimed the scout, in astonishment at this exhibition of strength.

"I weigh over two hundred, and have never yet met the man who could lift me with the ease that you do."

The madman did not reply to this compliment, but his face reflected the pleasure he felt. Buffalo Bill inwardly congratulated himself. He well knew that the insane are readily susceptible to flattery.

Once he had placed the white man in the saddle, Death Hand's ally proceeded to tie him there with thongs of green hide. He also took possession of the scout's weapons, and, hanging them out of reach on the horn of the saddle, proceeded to lead the horse in an opposite direction from the camp.

"You are not going to the camp, then?" inquired the mystified scout.

"No; I have just come from there."

"Ah, did you see the colonel?" Cody asked, ironically. "I was speaking to him of you only a short time ago."

"I have not seen him, yet he has heard from me to-night," was the sullen reply.

"What?" The scout could not restrain an expression of amazement in his tones.

"I shot three of his sentinels."

"You did!"

"Yes—to-night."

"But you were here?"

"I had just come from the camp when I saw lantern."

"Do you mean to say that you killed three men the very eyes of the camp?"

"I said so."

"And got away?"

"Bah! What do I care for your blue-coated v of soldiers?"

Buffalo Bill regarded the maniac in silence for ment. Then he exclaimed, in apparently awe work tones:

"You are the most wonderful man!"

Again an expression of delight played across tight field man's features. Buffalo Bill noted his satisfacti at the went on:

"Tell me how you did it?"

"As I have killed many a hated paleface before! Have you, as a scout, forgotten the mysterious deaths of the sentries of Fort Vale? Why, have not some of you scouts even disappeared while your friends hoped you were hot on our trail and about to capture us?"

For reply, Buffalo Bill gave a long whistle. He appeared to be dumfounded by what the other had told him.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "That's so! Several of the sentinels at Fort Vale have been picked off of late. Why, I have lost several scouts while on the trail! Who did it?"

The madman's eyes flashed with pride and hate.

"I did!" he said, drawing himself up to the full measure of his great height. "I hate your paleface race! One by one, I will wipe them out, and the great plains will be once more ours. Had I but been on the cliffs to-day, the daring rider who defied our warriors and escaped in safety would have paid for his boldness with his life. It was his daring that lost us the battle, for he told the troops of our ambush on the cliffs."

As he finished speaking, the redskin lapsed into a moody silence. Suddenly he burst into speech.

"Who was he?" he exclaimed.

Buffalo Bill's answer came as sharp as a rifle shot:

"I was the man!"

The mad Indian started. The glare of malignance that had lit up his eyes at the words of the scout soon faded, and was replaced by a look of admiration.

"It was like you," he said, with something like friend-

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While his tones. "Some of them told me it was Long scout hings. I laughed at them. I thought you were far

But v do you hate soldiers so?"

There se words, the madman halted, and turned to scout. There was fury in his eyes.

Bill met his stare of insane hatred calmly. As The l met, something in the steady gaze of the scout At on awe the giant wizard.

saber, w good cause to hate them," he said, almost the fifth They try to steal our country. I am sworn to brimmed till I myself am gathered to the great hunting

The r their g he turned once more, and they journeyed on

Thou ac for some distance. By this time day had large knind in the light of the morning Buffalo Bill ob- and by with the trained eye of the plainsman, that his captor left no trail. The scout had been in hopes his friends might track him.

With all the cunning of his race, the madman walked, and led the pony on which the scout was mounted, only over the most rocky portions of the trail.

Nor was this the limit of his cunning. The scout had noted during the night the frequent pauses they had made. He now saw the reason for this.

Suspended from his middle the redskin giant bore a huge grizzly bearskin. When it was impossible to find a spot sufficiently hard to leave no traces of their passage, he would drag this skin over the trail the pony had left, and then, with the cunning of a madman, fit the feet of the skin to his own, and leave what were apparently the tracks of a huge grizzly.

Sometimes, too, he would reverse the tracks. The scout realized that he had in his captor one of most shift and crafty foes he had ever encountered.

The border king knew that the trail the mad wizard was leaving would baffle even the most skillful and experienced of his scouts.

"He's a dandy, and no mistake!" he muttered to himself. "But perhaps he is a little too cunning. Let's hope so, anyway. If some one doesn't pick up my trail, things look just about as black as they can for me."

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE MANIAC'S CAVE.

Later in the day, however, the border king's admiration for the mad "soldier slayer" was reluctantly increased.

After the sun had been up for a couple of hours, the giant still made no halt, moving on apparently as if he were a man of steel, and had no intention of stopping for rest or food.

Buffalo Bill's admiration for the mad Indian's extraordinary endurance at length changed to irritation as the day wore on.

"Say, pard," he exclaimed, at last, "I've got a bag of provisions along, so suppose we stop right here and have something to eat?"

The Indian kept on, without even turning his head.

"Not here. Wait!" he grunted.

Buffalo Bill saw that it was better to endure his hunger and say nothing than to irritate the madman, whose friendship he began to feel sure he could gain in time.

At last they drew near a spot where the walls of the canyon formed a cliff. At the base of the declivity there rushed a swift torrent, whose roar, even at the distance the mad Indian and the scout were standing, was distinctly audible.

Taking the bearskin from him, the giant wizard of the Comanches told the scout to dismount.

His next move was to order Buffalo Bill to place his feet in the hind claws of the skin, which were contrived like a moccasin.

The scout watched his captor with a puzzled look, while the Indian wrapped the head of the horse lately ridden by the scout in a piece of blanket.

"What on earth is he going to do now?" he thought.

He was not left in the dark long.

The Indian grasped the blinded beast by the forelock and led it toward the cliff, beneath which was the torrent. The animal followed in perfect confidence.

Like a flash, Buffalo Bill realized the mad medicine man's cruel intention.

"Great Heaven, man!" he cried, in horror. "Don't be guilty of an act so inhuman as to kill that dumb animal! You are worse than a brute!"

For all the effect his plea had, it might have been addressed to ears of stone.

The madman took not the slightest notice, but kept on leading the unconscious animal nearer to the brink of the raging torrent.

As he neared the edge of the cliff, he stepped aside, and, with a scream that was almost human in its agony, the unfortunate brute plunged down to its death, while

a fiendish laugh rang from the madman's lips as his victim struck the water.

"Now," said the mad giant, turning, with a look of terrible triumph toward Buffalo Bill, "we are safe from pursuit, even should the horse have left any tracks."

The inhuman act of the madman had got Buffalo Bill's temper up, but his good sense controlled him, and he simply said:

"Yes. That's good for you."

"You are now entirely cut off from your friends."

"You show remarkable foresight," was the rejoinder.

"Now, you'll have to walk," was the Indian's next remark.

"To the Indian village? Why, that's miles away, over those mountains!"

"We are not going there."

"Where, then?"

"To my den, for I live like a wild beast."

"Is it far?"

"Not very. But why do you want to know?"

"Well, you see, I'm a little lame, and these things on my feet make it pretty hard for me to walk. Must I wear them?"

"Yes, for I leave no boot track behind me for the pale-faces to trail us by."

Buffalo Bill saw there was no use in further argument, and accepted the situation.

"All right, old man; jump right ahead," he said.

When they reached the end of the ridge, the madman halted, and told Buffalo Bill to take his feet out of the bear claws. He pointed down the clifflike side of the ridge.

"We must climb down here," he said, "for, you see, no horse could come this way."

"That's so, and it's pretty dizzy work for a man."

The madman swung over the cliff. The scout followed. Slowly they worked their way down the face of the rock. At last they reached a small canyon, about a quarter of a mile from the valley below.

It was thickly carpeted with fine grass, and there was also a deep, clear pool of water, evidently fed by a spring. There was a horse feeding on the grass, and, as he caught sight of the two men, he whinnied delightedly.

The scout recognized the animal, with a start of joy. It was his own—the one which had been stolen from him when he became a prisoner the first time.

"He knows you," said the Indian, with a glance of admiration at the splendid animal.

"I was afraid you had ridden him to death," was the response.

"He'd be pretty hard to kill," muttered the wizard; "but, unless I am mistaken, your time to die has come!"

He raised his hand and pointed to a small cave mouth in the cliff overlooking the valley.

"There is my den," he said, "and there you will remain till I decide how you are to die."

Cody did not seem at all affected by the sinister words of the mad wizard, but gazed about at the strange, little valley and all that it held with eager interest.

He was not the man to despair. His life had been passed in facing almost daily perils; but, as he gazed about him, and realized the almost absolute impossibility of anyone who did not know the trail ever reaching the secret valley, he felt the need of all his fortitude and resource.

"After all, while there is life there is hope!" he mused, as he followed the giant madman toward the opening of the cave in the cliff.

It was almost completely concealed by a mass of shrubbery that grew there. However, the opening admitted light enough to enable the scout to see what kind of a place it was to which his captor had brought him.

It was, indeed, as the madman had said, a den. It ran back some thirty feet, and was about ten feet in width in its widest part. In the further end was a pile of buffalo skins and several blankets. Near the entrance was a natural fireplace, and a split in the rocks above formed a rough-and-ready chimney. Stones served as andirons, and the cooking utensils were a frying pan, coffeepot and skillet. A tin cup, tin plate and knife and fork completed the household furnishings. For a cupboard, a hollow log, supported on rocks, served. The madman was evidently more civilized in his personal tastes than most Indians.

A couple of muskets had been ingeniously fitted as a trap in the rear of the cavern, and lariats had been stretched across and round the trigger, so that anyone entering, and not knowing the combination, would be killed.

A wolf lying dead in the mouth of the cave showed that even his light touch had set off one of the muskets, which were loaded with buckshot, and made him a victim, as he was trying to kidnap the deer meat. Red trails leading from the cave told that others had been wounded and sent howling away.

While the madman was unspringing his death trap, the scout had a chance to take in the cave and its surroundings.

But what particularly struck his attention was a group of graves under the pines.

There were five of them, and at each was a strange headboard.

The headboards told the story, and a sad one.

At one was a cavalry carbine, at another a trooper's saber, while two more had muskets at the head, and on the fifth a bowie knife was driven through the broad-brimmed sombrero of a scout.

The madman had kept trophies of his victims to mark their graves with.

Though he had only two revolvers in his belt and a large knife, there were weapons in plenty in the cavern, and belts of scouts and soldiers, too.

"Well, this is my den, and here you are to be my prisoner, Long Hair," the maniac said.

"See, I can keep even you here, for, though I have not the luxuries of the palefaces, I have the necessities for a man who hates them as I do!"

He went to the rear of the cavern as he spoke, and came back with a long and heavy chain and some irons.

The scout then noticed that a chain hung down through the chimney crevice in the rocks, and to this the madman fastened one end of the chain he held in his hand, locking them together with a stout padlock.

Unbinding the hands of the scout, he then put handcuffs on his wrists, connected by a chain several feet in length.

Then he placed a manacle around one ankle, and locked the end of the chain to it, which gave the scout some thirty feet of space to go to and fro, in and out of the cave.

"You are safe now, and so we'll have something to eat," said the madman, with one of his cunning leers, which meant so much.

"Ah, yes! I'll be quite comfortable, if you will only let me have my roll of blankets here. I see that you have the roll that was on my own horse, as well as the saddle and bridle, and you have the other outfit, too. We'll be quite at home, pard, and I'll do the cooking."

The madman seemed pleased by this cool speech. He threw the scout both rolls of blankets and the provisions, while he took a tin bucket to the pool for water.

Buffalo Bill was hungry, and was going to have a good, square meal, despite his terrible position.

He would let the future take care of itself, and just then look out for the present.

So, when the madman brought the water, he set to work and got up a really good repast.

His captor eat like a wild beast, and seemed to enjoy it.

Then the scout took from his traps which had been last captured with him a pipe and tobacco, and gave it to the man, he smoking his other pipe.

The madman enjoyed it greatly, and, as night was near at hand, went to his bed back in the cavern, and was soon fast asleep.

Buffalo Bill sat for a long time in thought, but, as night fell, he spread his blankets and also retired to rest.

The night passed without any disturbance, but the dawn of day found the madman up, and he went for water as though anxious to have the scout prepare breakfast.

This Buffalo Bill did, and the madman again ate ravenously, and afterward enjoyed his smoke, the scout filling the pipe for him.

Then his captor found another bucket somewhere, and brought them both filled with water from the pool.

"This will have to last you for several days, for I am going away," he said.

"Where?"

"To the rendezvous of the Comanches, to which they fled after the fight," and the madman gave a cunning leer.

"All right; I'll keep house until you get back."

"You can't get away."

"Don't want to—I'd rather live here with you."

The man smiled, as though pleased, and then, after seeing that the scout was secure, he started off from the cavern without uttering another word.

Buffalo Bill was left alone, in irons!

CHAPTER X.

TEXAS JACK ON A LOST TRAIL.

Buffalo Bill's departure from the camp had caused little comment, for he was, of course, in the habit of making scouting expeditions at all times and seasons.

But when he did not return, after many hours, it struck his friend Texas Jack that something must be wrong.

He knew that the present time was one when the

chief of the scouts would not voluntarily be long absent from camp, as his help and advice might be called for at any moment by the colonel in command.

At last, after pondering over the matter, Texas Jack decided that he would set out by himself, and see whether he could pick up the trail of the king of the scouts.

He would have been glad to have had the help of Wild Bill or Nick Wharton, but it happened that they were both assigned by the colonel to supervise the sentries around the camp, and see that they kept careful watch.

Nothing was more likely than that a few of the redskins might try to avenge the defeat they had sustained by creeping on the sleeping soldiers and killing some of them treacherously, as the mad wizard, indeed, did.

Mounting his horse, the scout rode away alone in search of his friend. As he could not have Wild Bill or Nick Wharton to come with him, he did not care to have anybody.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning when he started. He had soon ridden to the crest of the hill up which Buffalo Bill had been seen to go, and he was on the scene of the late battle.

Texas Jack knew full well that he was venturing upon dangerous ground, but he was not one to swerve from a duty, especially when he was seeking to find his chief and true friend, Buffalo Bill, for the two were as brothers.

He, therefore, pushed on, until, heading the valley and ascending the ridge, he came to where the trail to the pass was crossed by the Indian retreat.

But the retreating trail did not continue on with the one he was following. It was too far around to the Indian village that way, and the redskins, demoralized by their retreat, were flying then to their mountain fastnesses.

The trail nearly crossed the one he had been traveling.

It did not take the scout's experienced eye long to discover that in their retreat the Indians had been weighted down by their dead and wounded.

The marks of many *travois* were seen upon which the wounded had been borne and the dead had been piled, while there were more human footprints than pony tracks, as half of their horses had been stampeded and captured by the scouts, and there were scores of warriors who also had to walk back, and give up their ponies to draw the *travois* and carry the slightly wounded.

"Well, they certainly got it bad, and, as they lost half

their ponies, and Col. Kent entirely destroyed their village of hundreds of tepees, and forced the whole tribe further into the mountains, the result has been all that government wished it to be, and I think a great deal of the success was owing to Buffalo Bill," mused Texas Jack.

"But what of him, poor fellow? Well, I'll stick to the trail till I know where it ends."

So saying, Texas Jack halted for his noonday meal.

He found good grass for his horse, water was close at hand, and, having staked the animal out, he sat down and ate a cold dinner, for he dared not build a fire.

As he had ridden slowly all the morning, he did not halt longer than half an hour, and, again saddling up and mounting, he continued on his way.

After he had eaten his cold snack, he had gone about on foot, looking for the iron-shod hoofs of the horse ridden by his chief.

It did not take very long for him to find them, and he saw that they did not continue on in the trail. Instead, they went on only a few hundred yards and then branched off along a ridge to the left.

"This is strange," he muttered. "Buffalo Bill must have been following some special trail along here, though I do not see any. Still, a pony's unshod hoof would not leave the track that the large cavalry horse does with his iron shoes. Now to follow on."

Texas Jack returned to his horse to go on his way.

Along the ridge he went for over an hour, now and then unable to see any trace of a trail on the hard ground, and again picking it up once more further along.

At times he would come to a break in the heavy timber on the mountain top, and look away off over the broad valley to the higher range, where the Indians had their home.

Then the track would go near the other side, and he could catch a view of the cliffs which had been the scene of the redskins' ambush, and beyond which, a few miles distant, was the encampment of the soldiers.

Looking still further beyond, he could see the range upon which Fort Vale—the starting point of the expedition—was located, a long day's journey from where he then was.

He felt his utter loneliness, and yet, though liable to run upon a band of Indian scouts at any moment, nothing would deter him from still trying to find out what the fate of Buffalo Bill had been.

So on he pressed once more, until the shadows of the trees began to lengthen as the sun neared the western horizon.

He knew that he could not then reach the camp again until late in the night, and that there would be alarm felt for his fate, as well as the chief's, but on he went.

Suddenly he saw an opening ahead, a vista through the trees, and the trail he followed led straight to it.

The nature of the ground here made the iron-shod tracks more distinctly to be seen, and, as Texas Jack rode into the opening, he came out upon a cliff.

A roar reached his ears, and he knew that a torrent was dashing along far below in the valley.

He halted within fifty feet of the edge of the cliff, and, dismounting, went forward on foot.

It was a bold point of land jutting out from the ridge, and going off sheer downward five hundred feet, where the foaming torrent dashed madly along.

But it was not the height he looked down from that made the scout dizzy, but the fact that the trail of the iron-shod horse went directly over the cliff!

There was no doubt, no mistake.

Texas Jack had found the end of Buffalo Bill's trail.

He stood like one who had been struck a stunning blow. The discovery he had made dazed him.

He had followed the trail to the end, and had found — what?

The indication that his chief had ridden to his doom over the cliff.

Having recovered from the first shock, and subdued the emotion that had almost overwhelmed him, Texas Jack set to work.

He had an hour yet of sunlight, and he would see what it would reveal to him.

Taking his horse to a spot where he could feed, Jack unsaddled and unbridled him, so as to refresh him for the rapid ride he intended to make back to camp through the night.

He then went again to the cliff, and began to thoroughly investigate the trail.

There were the iron tracks, made as the horse went along at a walk, and, without seeming to see his danger, had gone over the cliff.

The tracks showed where one fore foot had just caught the edge, broke the earth away, and the other hoof had tried to catch a hold to prevent a fall.

The hind feet had scraped and struggled a second, in

a mad scramble to prevent the fall, and they had broken the cliff edge as they also went over. There was no doubt that the animal had walked over the cliff.

Looking coolly downward, Texas Jack beheld where the horse had fallen, six hundred feet below.

He could only have splashed downward into the swiftly flowing torrent, and been swept away beyond the reach of discovery of mortal man.

But was there a rider on the unfortunate animal?

Buffalo Bill had been the rider of that steed, and, if he had been in the saddle then, he, too, must have gone to his doom.

Texas Jack, with a feeling of fear in his heart, tried to hope that the horse had had no rider on its back when it went over.

But would the animal go without urging? He thought it very unlikely.

The tracks indicated that there had been no halt, no hesitation on the cliff, until the fore feet had gone over, and then the desperate struggle had come.

The scout wondered whether his friend and leader, worn out by all he had passed through, had fallen asleep in the saddle and gone over the cliff without seeing the danger that confronted him. This seemed the most likely solution of the problem.

But would not the horse have seen?

Texas Jack thought for a moment that it must have done; but then it struck him that the animal, tired and drowsy, might have been moping along, as horses often do, more than half asleep, and had not realized where he was going until it was too late to save himself from the fatal plunge.

Texas Jack walked back along the trail, and found that the horse had branched off toward the cliff in a seemingly aimless manner.

There was a faint trail along the ridge, which had been made by deer and other wild animals, and along this trail the iron-shod hoofs had traveled until they turned off toward the cliff.

The scout made a thorough search, and read all the signs with his trained and skillful eyes, coming at last to the conclusion that the horse, half asleep, had branched off from the trail and gone over the cliff.

But, still, he thought that there was a faint hope that the rider might have saved himself, and, accordingly, he went on along the ridge, looking carefully from side to side for any tracks made by a human foot.

There were none to be seen.

The scout had consumed much time in his search, and, as the sun was now touching the horizon, he decided that he had better retrace his steps back to the camp, and take counsel with Wild Bill, Nick Wharton and the other scouts, as to the making of a more thorough search for the missing border king.

He was returning toward his horse, when he was startled by the sudden whirr of arrows and the crack of a rifle.

Two of the arrows were well aimed. One struck him on his belt buckle, and snapped in halves as it struck the metal. The other stuck in the leather strap which swung over his shoulder, to which his rifle had hung before he left it with his saddle.

The arrow cut half through the leather strap and penetrated his hunting jacket and shirt. The barbed point wounded him slightly, but was checked by striking a rib.

But there had been a rifle shot, as well, and the bullet had whizzed through the scout's sombrero.

Texas Jack, like all the other noted scouts with whom he associated and among whom he was a leader, was a man of quick thought and action.

He realized in a moment that he had at least three dangerous enemies to deal with, and that they had the drop on him.

They had fired one volley, and were now, doubtless, waiting to see the result.

If it was not satisfactory to them, they would fire again, as quick as a flash.

There was no cover or hiding place within twenty yards. He dare not wait even to look around for his foes. He must use strategy at once.

Texas Jack dropped to the ground like a log, and, after writhing in apparent agony for a few moments, he lay still—as still as if he had been shot dead.

But in that moment of seeming death agony he had managed to draw his revolver and turn on his side, so that he faced in the direction from which the missiles of his enemies had come.

Then he waited, still as a tiger about to spring, grimly resolved to have vengeance for the attack that had been made upon him.

CHAPTER XI.

TEXAS JACK "PLAYS POSSUM."

Texas Jack had hardly fallen to the ground before he heard three loud yells of triumph. He recognized them

as the war cry of the Comanches, and he rejoiced in the thought that he had, apparently, only three foes to deal with.

He lay motionless, his revolver hidden by his arm, but the butt within reach of his hand. His eyes were almost closed, but through a narrow slit he could see all that went on.

His figure was as still as though, in reality, the life had left it, and he had assumed the rigid position of a man suddenly shot down.

Texas Jack was a clever actor, and the sudden peril in which he was placed inspired him to act as he had never acted before. But every sinew and muscle in his body was nerved to its full tension, ready to act on the instant.

The scout had not long to wait. Soon his half-closed eyes saw three figures advancing toward him.

One was that of a chief, in full war paint and feathers, and the others were those of two young braves. It was the chief who carried the rifle, while the young bucks were armed only with bows and arrows.

As they approached Texas Jack, their forms were boldly outlined against the setting sun.

The redskins came on boldly and unsuspectingly. They felt sure they had killed their game, and that all they had to do now was to lift the scalp.

But for once Indian cunning had been overmatched, and a paleface was the more crafty.

Texas Jack "played possum" so well that the three Indians were within a dozen feet of him before their keen eyes noticed a twitch of his right hand and arm.

They stopped dead in their tracks, as if they, too, had been shot; and in a second their hands went to their belts, to draw their tomahawks and finish their blood-thirsty work.

But that twitch was fatal to them, for it was the movement by which Texas Jack grasped the butt of his revolver.

Without moving from his recumbent position, the scout touched the hair trigger three times.

Each shot followed the other so rapidly that the three reports were almost mingled into one. Before any one of the redskins could draw a weapon, he had met his fate.

It was Texas Jack's turn now to shout. He leaped to his feet, with a triumphant yell, and promptly walked over to the three bodies, to make sure that the men were

really dead. He did not want them to be "playing possum" with him.

There was no doubt about the matter. They were all stone dead. As Texas Jack bent over the three forms, he saw that the redskins were all decked out in their finest ornaments.

"They were going on some special mission, I guess," the scout muttered to himself. "I wonder what it was? The chief looks like a big man in the tribe. Maybe he is Death Hand himself. I'd better scout around, and see whether there are any more of them in the neighborhood."

Texas Jack did so, and he soon discovered four Indian ponies, which were hobbled a short distance from the place where his own horse was staked out. He noticed that the ponies also were decked in their most brilliant trappings.

He wondered, for a moment, where the man for the fourth pony might be, and then he saw that the stirrups were tied up. The animal was being taken as a led horse to carry some one back.

"And they were going along that ridge trail when they came upon my horse, and simply laid for me," muttered Texas Jack. "I wonder whether they knew what has become of Buffalo Bill, and whether they were going for him. Something seems to tell me that he is not dead. I wonder whether he can have fallen into the power of that madman again?"

"Well, I had better hurry back to the camp, with these fine trappings and ponies, and get the boys together, so that we can make a thorough search."

In the gathering twilight, the scout hastily eat his supper, and then fastened the Indian ponies together, took the arms and ornaments of the dead Indians as signs of his prowess, and rode off, leading the ponies.

The night soon grew dark, but he was too good a scout to care for that, and he went along at a brisk canter, without the slightest fear of losing his way.

It was after midnight when he found the camp, and drew rein quickly at the sharp command:

"Halt! Hands up!"

"Hello, Wild Bill! You keep good watch!" shouted Texas Jack.

In a few moments he was face to face with his friend, and was telling him all about his fight with the Indians and his mysterious loss of Buffalo Bill's trail.

There was much excitement in the camp at the news, and soon after daybreak Texas Jack rode off again, with a party of thirty scouts behind him, among them being Buffalo Bill's two greatest friends, Wild Bill and Nick Wharton. They were going to see whether they could not pick up the trail again, find out what had become of their beloved chief, and rescue him, if he should stand in need of rescue.

But the ingenuity of the mad wizard of the Comanches completely baffled even their trained eyes. They searched all day, but they could not find the cave in which Buffalo Bill was shackled and awaiting a terrible death by torture. What his fate would have been, had it not been for a lucky encounter which is to be related in the next chapter, one shudders to contemplate.

CHAPTER XII.

BUFFALO BILL RESCUED.

It was with a feeling of despair in their hearts that Wild Bill and Texas Jack gave the word to camp and cook supper toward the close of the afternoon.

They had searched for the trail all day in vain, and they feared that Cody, after passing through numberless perils safely, had met his doom at last.

Silently and sadly, the men lighted fires and prepared to camp for the night. Texas Jack, well aware of the dangers to which they were exposed in the enemy's country, posted sentries, and warned them to be thoroughly on the alert.

The scouts had not camped more than half an hour before one of the sentries came hastening in with the report that from his post on a nearby ridge he had seen a party of Indians approaching. They were coming straight in the direction of the camp, he said.

Wild Bill and Texas Jack hurried to the point where the man had been stationed, first sending out to call in the other sentries.

When they got to the ridge and looked cautiously over it, they saw a party of about a dozen redskins coming toward them.

They were nearly a mile distant, but the keen eyes of the scouts saw that they had in their midst, bound upon a horse, a white man. He was being taken along with them as a prisoner.

The two men looked at one another in breathless excitement. They were so overcome at the sight—by the

phenomenal luck which had come to them in their moment of despair—that they hardly dared to speak.

"It must be Cody," muttered Texas Jack, hoarsely.

"It looks like him," said Wild Bill.

"And the redskins are coming straight into our hands. They haven't the least suspicion."

"We can ambush them and rescue him before they realize what has happened. They are riding along in a bunch, and they haven't even sent scouts out to clear the way for them. The chief in command of that party can't have very much sense."

Texas Jack thought swiftly for a moment, and then he burst out:

"I see it all now! Buffalo Bill was captured and hidden away somewhere. They sent that party of three whom I killed so that they could take him to the retreat of the tribe and torture him to death at their leisure. That was the meaning of the led horse!"

"Those three braves didn't come back, and then this other party was sent out to do the work. What splendid luck! We might have searched for him for a month without finding him, and now they are leading him straight into our hands!"

"You have hit it right, but we have no time to stay here talking. We must hurry back and post the men for an ambush."

The two scouts hastened back to their comrades, and it was not long before all the arrangements for surprising the Indians had been made.

Luckily, the fires were burning very brightly, the wood being dry, and they were sending up little or no smoke.

As the sun was still shining brightly, the glare of the flame could not be seen at any distance, even by the sharp eyes of the Comanches.

The ground was thickly covered with bushes, so that it was easy for all the men to take cover near the crest of the ridge toward which the Indians were riding.

Breathlessly, they waited for their foes to approach.

The Comanches came riding on swiftly. They were evidently anxious to reach the rendezvous of their tribe before night drew in.

Soon they came within range, but not a shot was fired at them by the hidden scouts.

Wild Bill had realized, with the quick eye of the born soldier, that the victory must be instant and complete—or else worthless.

Every one of the Indians would have to fall at the

first volley, or Buffalo Bill's life would be placed in terrible danger.

If even a single brave survived the first shower of bullets, he would probably take revenge by burying his tomahawk instantly in the skull of the captive. This thought had made Wild Bill caution his comrades not to fire a single shot until the Comanches were right in their midst.

The result fell out as he anticipated.

The redskins rode unsuspectingly into the ambush, and the first intimation they had of the presence of their hidden foes was the sharp crack of the rifles of Wild Bill and Texas Jack, almost simultaneously.

The report had not died away before all the other scouts pressed the triggers of their rifles.

The Comanches, caught in a perfect death trap, reeled from their saddles.

Each of the scouts had drawn a careful bead upon his man, and, as the party of Indians was inferior in numbers to the white men, some of the redskins were targets for more than one rifle.

Not one of them escaped from that terrible volley, and all save two were killed outright.

But one of these two happened to be the brave who was riding alongside Buffalo Bill and leading his horse by a lariat.

A bullet struck this man in the chest, but did not wound him mortally.

He reeled for a moment, and then regained his seat upon his horse.

Quick as a flash, he turned toward his captive, and whipped out his scalping knife from his belt.

It flashed aloft in the sunlight, but before it could descend three rifles spoke again, and the Indian fell to the earth, with the top of his head almost shot away.

Texas Jack, Wild Bill and Nick Wharton had seen the peril of the king of the scouts in the same instant, and they had been quick to save him.

Almost at the same moment, the surviving Indian was dispatched by a bullet from the rifle of one of the other scouts.

The victory was complete.

Not a single redskin in the party was left alive.

Wild Bill rushed forward to Buffalo Bill, and unbound the rawhide ropes with which he was tied on the horse he was riding. His wrists were also tied, and he had been powerless to do anything to save himself—as power-

less as he was when he was confined in the cave with chains by the mad wizard.

His comrades warmly congratulated him, and led him back to the fires which they had kindled, and which were still blazing merrily. They ate the supper which had been interrupted by the approach of the Indians, and eagerly demanded an account of Cody's adventures.

He told them how he had been taken prisoner by the mad wizard and shackled in the mysterious cave.

He had waited there for many hours, a prey to the most gloomy thoughts. If he did not perish there of hunger and thirst, he expected to be fetched by the Indians to suffer death with the most hideous tortures.

He was surprised that they were so long in coming, but the delay was explained by Texas Jack's encounter with the first party of three braves.

It was clear that when this party did not return to the Indians' rendezvous in due time, a second, and stronger, party was sent.

This party had struck the chains off Buffalo Bill, and him with rawhide thongs and forced him to ride off with them, only to fall into the hands of the scouts and to meet their doom.

"I only wish that madman had been with the party," said Buffalo Bill, as he concluded his story. "He is the most dangerous man in the tribe, just as Red Cloud told me.

"I guess the country is full of roving bands of Indians. We had better camp here for to-night, and do some scouting in the morning, to see what we can find out about their movements, before we return to the colonel."

CHAPTER XIII.

A RACE FOR LIFE.

What, meanwhile, had become of the mad wizard of the Comanches?

Crazed by his insane hatred of the whites, he had been working hard to rally the redskins after their terrible defeat, and to inspire them to strike another blow at the soldiers.

It was no easy task. The memory of the execution done by the artillery, to say nothing of the rifles handled so unerringly by the scouts, lingered in the minds of the Comanches, and made them reluctant to face the white men again.

But Evil Spirit possessed remarkable power over the

Indians, and by alternately promising them victory through his supposed magic arts and threatening them with the curses of the Great Manitou if they disobeyed him, he at last prevailed on them to do his will.

The war council at which the decision to attack the whites again was arrived at had hardly broken up when a couple of redskin scouts came riding in to report that they had discovered the party headed by Texas Jack and Wild Bill.

The news of the total annihilation of the party of braves who had set out to fetch Buffalo Bill to the camp was greeted with loud cries of rage by the Indians, and, stirred up to a pitch of frenzy by the exhortations of the mad medicine man, they at once determined that they would have revenge on the scouts, even if they could not have it on the larger body of soldiers.

The result was that, a few hours after daybreak, when Buffalo Bill and his comrades were about to set forth on their scouting expedition, they saw a party of nearly three hundred Indians advancing over the ridges to attack them.

Fortunately, they were warned in plenty of time by the watchful men on guard.

It was out of the question to think of standing up to such a large war party and fighting it with the small force at their command.

The only thing to do was to seek safety in flight; and, if their horses were not swift enough to shake off pursuit, then they must make a stand at some point of vantage.

It was the work of a few moments only to saddle the horses, mount and ride away at a smart gallop.

Looking back as they crossed the top of a ridge, Buffalo Bill saw that the redskins were in full cry after them. They had seen the hurried retreat, and put forth the best speed of their horses to prevent their intended prey from escaping them.

Texas Jack told him, as they sped along side by side, that the troops were to have moved away on the previous day further into the Comanche country, to destroy several small villages. They were now, in all probability, at least fifty miles distant.

The scouts descended the hills, passed through canyon after canyon, and at last debouched into the open plain.

Mile after mile was passed at a great rate, but still the Comanches clung doggedly to their heels, and at last

it was evident that the best-mounted among them were rapidly gaining.

Some of the white men, having fine horses under them, could have ridden away from the rest and soon placed themselves beyond all danger of pursuit.

But three or four of the scouts were badly mounted, and, though they urged their horses to the uttermost, they kept the rest back.

In that gallant company of frontiersmen there was not one man who would care to save his own scalp by abandoning his comrades.

"It's no good, Bill!" gasped Texas Jack, at last, looking round and seeing that the Comanches were swiftly coming up. "We must make a fight for it. We'll all go under, I reckon, but we'll send some of those red vermin to their happy hunting grounds first!"

"Look ahead!" said Cody, waving his hand to an object far off on the distant rim of the prairie.

"Thunder!" yelled Texas Jack, as his keen eyes caught sight of the object to which his friend pointed. "It's a stockade!"

"A deserted one, probably," remarked the king of the scouts, calmly. "I have heard that there is one in this section of the country, though I never saw it. It was built by a party of settlers, who afterward moved off to find a less troubled territory to live in.

"It's strange that the Indians did not set fire to it, but it's lucky for us. We must reach that stockade, even if we kill some of the horses to do it. Once there, we may be able to stand off the redskins till the colonel sends a party back to look for us—or until they get tired of the business."

"How far off is the stockade, do you reckon?" asked Texas Jack.

"Fully ten miles, I should say. Don't you make it all of that?"

"Yes. I doubt if we can last the distance."

"We will have to!" said the border king, with grim determination. "I wish we had brought some of the ponies of those redskins you killed yesterday along with us. Then we would be able to remount the men whose horses are fagged."

In the haste of their departure, they had not thought of doing this. Each man had simply vaulted into a saddle and ridden off at top speed, leaving the Indians' ponies behind.

Buffalo Bill had taken one of them—the best—and he found that it was superior to the animals ridden by most of his comrades.

He rode back along the line of his comrades, pointed out the stockade to them, and urged them to make desperate efforts to gain it, even if they killed their horses in so doing.

With this goal in front of them, their eyes brightened, and they lost the look of grim but hopeless resolve which they had hitherto worn when they saw how the Indians were gaining on them.

They had been looking forward to a death struggle, but now they nerved themselves for a fight for life. The difference in spirit is a great one, even to such exceptionally brave men as these frontiersmen were.

The Comanches continued to gain, and presently Buffalo Bill decided that some effort must be made to check them.

Calling to Wild Bill and two of the best-mounted among the scouts to follow him, he rode back along his tracks, and soon came within range of the leading redskins.

Yelling with the expectation of a speedy revenge, they charged at the top of their speed toward the four daring scouts.

The rifles of the latter spurted flame, and four of the foremost savages were seen to reel from their horses.

Three of them never stirred again, but the fourth rose to his feet and limped to the rear, where he was picked up on the saddle by another brave.

The advance of the Comanches was checked, but only for a moment. They spread out in a crescent, and came sweeping down on the scouts as swiftly as before.

"One more shot, boys, and then we must make tracks!" cried Buffalo Bill, again lifting his rifle to his shoulder.

It was high time, for more than a score of the Comanches were already returning the fire. Their bullets

were badly aimed, but some of them whizzed in unpleasant proximity to the gallant scouts.

A second volley was fired, with an effect as fatal as the first, and then Buffalo Bill turned his horse's head and dug in the spurs.

His companions followed his example, but they were not all to escape unscathed.

The man riding by Cody's side suddenly gave a low groan and rolled heavily out of his saddle.

Quick as a flash, the border king reined up, jumped to the ground and lifted his comrade in his arms.

It was useless.

A single glance showed him that the poor fellow was dead. He had been shot clean through the heart.

Cody remounted in a second, and caught up his companions with a few bounds of his horse, for they had turned to await him.

The Indians, profiting by this delay, had drawn perilously near, and they whooped with savage joy when they saw the scout fall.

But, if they thought they had the others at their mercy, they soon discovered their mistake.

All of the three were very well mounted, and they slowly drew away until they were out of range.

In a few minutes more they had caught up with the rest of their party, who were now drawing near to the stockade.

Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill raced at top speed toward the little fort.

They wanted to reach it and swing open the door, which was probably rusty and hard to move, so that there would be no delay when the rest of the party got there, with the redskins at their heels.

They were in better luck than they had expected.

When they got to the stockade, they found that it was strongly built and of fairly large dimensions.

The door, though it had stood long closed, was not difficult to open, as the hinges were of wood, as well as the rest of the structure. It could be bolted on the inside with heavy blocks of timber.

Soon all the men and their horses were inside. Two of the poor animals collapsed from sheer exhaustion as

they reached the goal of their hard ride, and one of them died in a few moments.

"We can make a good stand here," said Buffalo Bill, as he watched the disappointed savages circling round the little stronghold on their horses, well out of rifle range. "If we have to go under, we can, at least, make them pay dearly for our scalps."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MAD WIZARD'S FATE.

The Comanches presently withdrew and held a council of war.

Looking through a pair of field glasses lent him by Texas Jack, to whom they had been given by one of the army officers during the campaign, Buffalo Bill saw that his old enemy, the mad wizard, was among the group of chiefs who were debating together as to the best course to pursue.

The border king guessed, from the motions they made as they talked, that most of the chiefs and head braves were opposed to trying to storm the stockade.

They probably feared that it would cost them the loss of too many warriors, and they were in favor of waiting until darkness fell.

But Evil Spirit was of a different mind.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Buffalo Bill, as he watched the madman narrowly through the glasses. "He is crazier than ever! See! He is talking to them now, and absolutely foaming at the mouth! He evidently wants them to attack us at once.

"He sees red, sure enough! Ha! He is bringing them round to his view. They are jumping up and shouting and brandishing their tomahawks. They will soon try to rush us.

"That fellow must have a wonderful influence over them, to make them ready to dash upon their death in such a crazy fashion."

"He shall get my first bullet!" said Wild Bill, grimly.

Soon the Indians advanced against the stockade, with a recklessness of danger which the scouts had never seen equaled in all their experience of border warfare.

They seemed to have lost absolutely all regard for their lives—all fear of danger.

The mad wizard had evidently infected them with his own crazy fanaticism.

They raced up to the stockade on horseback, dismounted when they were within about twenty yards of it, and, failing to burst in the heavy door, hacked away at the fastenings which bound the palisades together, using their tomahawks for this purpose.

Of course, meanwhile, the men of the little garrison were not idle.

Firing fast and accurately, they sent many of the red enemy to the ground, but the slaughter only seemed to incite the rest to a keener pitch of savage fury.

The mad wizard was foremost in the fray, moving hither and thither with the agility of a panther, and spurring the braves to almost superhuman exertions to hack down the stout palisades.

He was fired at again and again, and wounded in several places, but he seemed to bear a charmed life.

Though covered with blood from head to foot, his strength and energy did not seem to flag for a moment.

At last a big section of the wall of the stockade went down, with a loud crash.

The Comanche warriors swarmed through the gap, yelling their war cry, but they were met with a hail of bullets by Buffalo Bill and his companions.

Evil Spirit led the onslaught, brandishing an enormous tomahawk, which most warriors would have found it difficult even to lift.

He was one of the first to fall in the breach.

Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack shot at him together, and both of their bullets lodged squarely in his forehead.

The Comanches, falling on every hand under that terrible fire, were seized with a sudden panic when they saw the death of their maniacal leader.

They had thought that he was invulnerable—that the Great Spirit had taken him under his special protection, and he could not be slain by the white men whom he hated so bitterly.

Now they found out their mistake, and all the fighting spirit seemed to leave them.

Pursued by a hail of bullets, they fled back to their horses, and rode away—all that were left of them. They had lost more than sixty men in their vain assault. Death Hand had fallen, as well as Evil Spirit.

Once again, spurred on by a young chief, they advanced to the attack, but they had no real heart for it, and were easily driven back.

Then they came to the conclusion that the scalps of the scouts would cost them too dearly, and they slowly rode away.

Buffalo Bill and his comrades did not leave their stronghold for several hours, but, when they were sure that the enemy had really retreated, they resumed their journey, and caught up with the little army under Col. Kent on the following day.

Further punishment was inflicted on the Comanches in several small engagements, and they were soon glad to beg for peace, and give hostages for their good behavior in the future.

Buffalo Bill, Texas Jack and the other scouts subsequently had many other, and equally thrilling, adventures, some of which will be told in future stories in this library. But, amid them all, the king of the scouts never forgot his strange experiences with Evil Spirit, the mad wizard of the Comanches, the only man who twice managed to vanquish him and make him a prisoner.

THE END.

No boy who loves bright and breezy, stirring and thrilling stories of Western adventure should omit to secure a copy of the next story in the BUFFALO BILL LIBRARY, No. 226, "Buffalo Bill on a Traitor's Track; or, The White Chief of the Crows."

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